

research snapshot

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Homeless People Need Stable Employment and Coordinated Services to Climb Out of Poverty

What is this research about?

Homelessness is a growing issue in Canada and the rest of the developed world. Research tells us that solutions to homelessness need better integration of government, business, and community groups. Stable employment is a critical part of any strategy to combat homelessness. All members of a community need to work together to tackle the barriers homeless people face in getting stable and well paying jobs.

What did the researchers do?

Researchers summarized past literature on homelessness and employment. Then, the researchers asked 130 homeless people from the Niagara area about their employment experiences, housing situation and access to services. Following this, the researchers also surveyed social services assisting the homeless with getting jobs and businesses in the region who employ the homeless.

What you need to know:

Before any successful employment, the homeless need stable and secure housing. Employment programs for the homeless should be designed to help with all of the barriers that homeless people face in getting a stable job. The focus needs to be on securing long-term employment for the homeless instead of short-term jobs. Education and skills training is crucial to getting long-term well paying employment with benefits.

What did the researchers find?

Researchers found that 80% to 97% of the homeless people interviewed have been employed in the formal market. However, the jobs they hold are mostly temporary, risky, pay low wages, and offer no benefits or opportunities for advancement. Researchers found that the homeless face a number of barriers to getting quality employment. Some of the barriers are:

- Lack of permanent and secure housing
- Lack of skills and education
- Physical or mental health issues
- Drug and substance abuse

- Criminal and legal involvement
- Lack of transportation
- Irregular employment histories

How can you use this research?

Policymakers, social services agencies, and employers can use this research to better coordinate their efforts of employing the homeless. Social service agencies can use the findings to design homeless-specific employment programs. The programs must be focused on helping the homeless find long-term employment instead of temporary placements.

About the Researchers

Stephanie Baker Collins is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at York University. Michael Lethby, James Syrotuik, and Laura Collins served as associate investigators for the study. This research was funded by the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative.

sbcollin@yorku.ca

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Homelessness, Services for homeless, Social support services, Housing, Affordability

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kmbunit@yorku.ca

www.researchimpact.ca

